

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 CANBER 06386 140829Z  
ACTION SS-25

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O 140744Z AUG 78  
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4041

S E C R E T CANBERRA 6386

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR ALSTON

EO 11652: XGDS-2  
TAGS: MARR, PINT, AS  
SUBJECT: DEFENCE MINISTER KILLEN'S UNCERTAINTY OVER SENSITIVE  
ASPECTS OF JOINT U.S.-AUSTRALIAN DEFENSE COOPERATION

REF: (A) STATE 184110; (B) CANBERRA 6016

1. THIS AFTERNOON I DELIVERED TO GEOFF YEEND A LETTER TO  
THE PM REPORTING ON THE RECENT ASEAN MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON  
AND NEW YORK PER STATE 203004.

2. THEREUPON I SAID THAT THE PRINCIPAL REASON FOR MY VISIT  
WAS TO HAVE HIS AND THE PM'S REACTION TO THE SUBJECT MATTER  
OF REFTEL (A) WHICH HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO HIM BY MEANS OF A  
PARAPHRASED VERSION WHICH CHRIS SQUIRE READ TO HIM AND THEN  
DESTROYED.

3. THERE IS NOTHING CONCLUSIVE TO REPORT. THE SUBJECT HAS  
BEEN DIRECTLY DISCUSSED BY YEEND WITH THE PM AT LEAST WHEN  
THEY WERE IN PERTH AND PERHAPS SINCE, BUT WITH NO ONE ELSE.  
YEEND EXPECTS TO MAKE AN INDIRECT INQUIRY OF ARTHUR TANGE  
WHEN TANGE RETURNS FROM NEW ZEALAND.

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4. THERE IS NO TIME FRAME FOR A RESPONSE, BUT THE  
WITHERS MATTER, THE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT AND THE  
BUDGET HAVE REQUIRED A REORDERING OF PRIORITIES AND  
THE SUBJECT MATTER OF REFTEL (A) HAS BEEN DOWNGRADED.  
THIS IS NOTED BY YEEND WITH APOLOGY AND A STATEMENT  
THAT I WILL BE ADVISED AFTER HIS CONVERSATION WITH  
TANGE. IN THIS RESPECT HE ANTICIPATES TANGE WILL

ASK FOR HARD EVIDENCE (SEE PARA 2 OF REFTTEL (A) AND IN THAT EVENT YEEND WILL REQUEST PERMISSION FROM ME TO DISCLOSE HIS SOURCE.

5. GENERALLY I GATHER THAT NEITHER THE PM NOR YEEND IS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR CONCERN, FEELING THAT THE HERETOFORE ENJOYED STRONG RELATIONSHIP ON JOINT FACILITIES HAS NOT BEEN IMPAIRED BY KILLEN'S PERFORMANCE. BUT BOTH RECOGNIZE OUR CONCERN IS REAL, DESPITE THE FACT THAT NEITHER THE MINISTERS NOR THE BUREAUCRACY ON THE INDIRECT APPROACH HAS ADMITTED ANY DIFFERENT ATTITUDE OR CHANGE. THE BUREAUCRACY IS REPORTED AS SENSITIVE HOWEVER AND DETERMINED THAT THE SITUATION WHICH WAS SAID BY KILLEN TO EXIST WOULD NOT OCCUR AGAIN.

6. YEEND EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT FROM HEREON OUR EFFORT SHOULD BE NOT TOWARD FIXING BLAME FOR "THE KILLEN AFFAIR", AND I AGREED WITH HIM ON THIS, BUT TOWARD REMEDYING THE SITUATION TO REDUCE THE LIKELIHOOD OF A RECURRENCE.

7. TO THIS END I GATHER YEEND AND THE PM ARE THINKING AT LEAST TENTATIVELY OF CREATING A SENIOR LEVEL COMMITTEE THROUGH WHICH THERE MIGHT BE RUN ALL NEW DEVELOPMENTS PROPOSED FOR ALL JOINT FACILITIES. THE CONCERN HERE IS THAT THEY DO NOT WANT "BUREAUCRATIC TREATMENT"

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OF THE INFORMATION AND FEAR A NEW COMMITTEE MIGHT RESULT IN JUST THAT. SUCH A COMMITTEE, HOWEVER, WAS THE ONLY SUGGESTION THAT HAS SURFACED SO FAR.

8. I SUBMIT THAT THE SUBJECT MATTER HAS SIMPLY NOT HAD THE MULE'S ATTENTION AS YET. I HOPE AND BELIEVE IT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY TO USE THE 2 X 4 TREATMENT.

9. I WILL KEEP YOU FULLY ADVISED, AND AFTER A DECENT INTERVAL AND NOT HAVING HEARD FROM YEEND, I WILL GO BACK TO HIM.

10. FOR THE MOMENT, THE PM AND HIS GOVERNMENT HAVE WHAT APPEAR AT LEAST TO THEM MORE IMPORTANT FISH TO FRY.

ALSTON

SECRET

NNN

## Message Attributes

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